

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH

APRIL 18, 2005

Progress on Destruction of Influenza A, H2N2, Proficiency Testing Specimens.

On April 8, 2005, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) was notified by the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) that viable Influenza A, H2N2 virus was sent to labs around the world as a part of proficiency testing materials. As discussed in a previous communication, this agent was responsible for a pandemic in 1957. This strain has not been documented in circulation since 1968, suggesting immunity would be minimal in those born since 1968. On April 11, proficiency providers contacted labs to request they confirm via fax that all residual samples had been destroyed. On April 14, MDCH received a list of Michigan labs that had received these samples. To date, MDCH is aware of 126 Michigan laboratories that received samples, and we have been in contact with them to confirm destruction of samples and all sample derivatives.

CDC has recommended monitoring and reporting of influenza-like illness (ILI) among laboratory staff who worked with this virus. Testing of staff is not recommended in the United States at this time. The biosafety level 2 (BSL-2) precautions required for this agent would be expected to protect workers from exposure and infection, therefore the risk of transmission is considered low. CDC is recommending that laboratories with workers with recent exposure (**within the last 10 days**) to the H2N2 test samples monitor their worker's health for ILI (i.e., temperature of greater than or equal to 100 °F and cough or sore throat). If a lab worker with recent exposure to these samples develops such symptoms, clinical specimens should be obtained and tested for influenza A by a commercially available rapid test, indirect fluorescent antibody, direct fluorescent antibody, or PCR. If the sample is positive for influenza A, contact MDCH at 517-335-8063. The specimen may also be sent to MDCH for testing but please contact the MDCH lab (517-335-8102) prior to sending samples so that the specimen is not placed into routine culture.

We feel there are some important lessons to be learned from this experience.

1. Procedures, such as vortexing, which may produce an aerosol, should always be conducted in a biological safety cabinet. Do not vortex samples on the countertop prior to direct testing.
2. CDC recommends that labs do not keep proficiency samples in the laboratory after receiving results from the proficiency provider.

If you have any questions please contact Patty Clark, Interim Virology Section Manager, Bureau of Laboratories at 517-335-8102.

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